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WHY SET ASIDE 1978 ASSURANCES ON SAUDI ARABIA F-15S?

-- It is true that in 1978 Secretary of Defense Brown assured Congress that we did not intend to sell Conformal Fuel Pods or Multiple Ejection Bomb Racks to the Saudis and that we had no intention to provide an air refueling capability. We also stated at that time that there were no plans to sell AWACs or the AIM-9L Missile to Saudi Arabia.

-- I am aware of a central concern of the Congress and others in this country regarding that undertaking. The undertaking was made in consultations with the Congress. We would like the Congress to consider with us whether that decision continues to serve U.S. interests given the radically altered strategic situation in the area and the Administration's new approach to dealing with that situation.

-- The commitment was made in 1978. Since the fall of the Shah and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan there is now a significantly greater threat to Western interests and to the security of states in the region.

-- We have a new approach to the region to deal with this new situation. This time we have not evaluated the question of F-15 enhancement as an isolated question of U.S.-Saudi or U.S.-Israeli relation, but seen our decision on this issue as an element in our overall new strategy for dealing with the Soviet threat.

-- We have reviewed this question in this new context and have determined that our own interests in these changed circumstances require a fresh approach. We are consulting with you in the light of our common recognition of the altered strategic situation in the area.

-- We are now asking the Congress to consider with us impact of the profoundly threatening circumstances facing the West at this time, and to join the Administration in taking steps to enhance Western security in the region. These additional resources to Saudi Aravia, and the measures proposed to assure the continuing viability of Israel's defenses are contributions to our new approach.